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vernment, was betrayed for once the mild and merciful tenor of
 into an act of cruelty inconsis- his reign.
 tent with his character, and with

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF DISTINGUISHED PERSONS.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF ELIZABETH CARTER.

“When Heaven evolv'd its perfect plan,
 It form'd no creature of ignoble strain,
 Of heart unteachable, obtuse of brain.”

MODERN times have been peculiarly favourable to the development of female genius; for notwithstanding the boasted politeness of the ancients, the women do not appear to have enjoyed among them a very enviable station in society. True, indeed, we hear of illustrious matrons in the days of the Romans, who were acknowledged by their contemporaries to have possessed many accomplishments; and the greatest orator of his age and nation candidly avows, that by visiting the house of one distinguished family, he contrived to polish both his language and his manners. We have also been told, that, in another republic, the beauties of the Greek language were generally and critically understood by the women of Athens. But it must be admitted, that knowledge was never so generally diffused as at present; and it may even be asserted, that females in more modern times have, in point of mental accomplishments, eclipsed those who flourished in the best days of the Greek and Roman commonwealths.

During the dreary periods of feudal tyranny, and ecclesiastical superstition, the human mind, submitting to the trammels of opinion, became torpid. To excel in feats of chivalry, was the only boast of the steel clad

baron; to bind gallant knights in the silken chains of a romantic affection, was the sole glory of the noble damsel, secluded under the battlements of a moated castle, which could not be approached without crossing horrid draw-bridges, and passing under tremendous portcullises.

At length, letters dawned on the shores of the Mediterranean, and the South became suddenly enlightened. The introduction of printing, by multiplying books, and facilitating the means of knowledge, produced a new epoch in the history of the world; the graces of the mind began to be esteemed as well as those of the body; and the females of modern Europe, by cultivating the former, produced a new, a more rational, and a more constant source of amusement, than their ancestors had ever experienced.

The taste for mental cultivation was not long confined to Italy; it soon crossed the Alps, and the court of France, then considered the most polite in the universe, became famous for ladies, whose pens, if we are to give credit to the tales of their lovers, acted like so many spears, and produced wounds more deadly than their eyes had done.

The English nation, who have always affected to condemn, while they have afterwards imitated France, did not fail to follow the example set by the latter; but the studies of the females of Great Britain assumed a graver, as well as a more permanent and useful cast.

Nicholas Udal, master of Eton

school, who was patronized by a queen-author, Catharine Parr, mentions the "great number, of women at that time in England, given to the studie of human sciences, and of strange tongues;" and he adds, "it was a common thing to see young ladies so nouzzled and trained in the studie of letters, that they willingly set all other vain pastymes at naught for learnyng's sake."

Not content with reading, some of the most distinguished personages of that age wrote also, and entering of course into the spirit of the times, devoted their talents chiefly to polemical divinity. One of the many consorts of the first "Defender of the Faith," and who generously interceded for, and saved the University of Cambridge from his barbarous spoliations, published a work entitled, "Queen Catharine Parr's lamentation of a blind sinner, bewailing the ignorance of her blind life."

Queen Mary began a translation of Erasmus' Paraphrase on St. John, and we have the unsuspected testimony of a great man* to her knowledge of Latin. Elizabeth, under the tutorage of Roger Ascham, made great progress in several languages, and is said, among other things, to have translated two of the orations of Isocrates, and a play of Euripides. The amiable and unfortunate Lady Jane Grey appears to have been the most accomplished female of that age; she was endowed with a superior capacity, and uncommon powers of application. So much was she devoted to the study of literature, that while her parents, with their household, were hunting, she was deeply engaged in philosophical studies; and on being rallied on her grave pursuits, she used to reply, "Alas! good people, they know not what true pleasure means."

* Erasmus.

Time has produced a change in the fashion of literature. The study of languages occupies a subordinate station, and more useful studies are now pursued. Females have ventured to soar to the regions of fancy; they have excelled in the delineation of the finer shades of sentiment and character; and examples have not been wanting among them, of a successful exertion of those faculties which have been erroneously assumed as being more peculiarly appropriate to the "lords of the creation." We have many late instances of the pen of political and theological controversy having been powerfully wielded by females; the abstruse doctrines of mathematical science have been rendered easy by female instruction; and the readers of the Belfast Magazine are now presented with the memoirs of a lady, who may be justly styled one of the severest students, and one of the profoundest scholars, of an age which has been distinguished both by industry and learning. It must, however, be regretted, that her talents and her great powers of application were not employed in a more useful sphere. Instead of devoting her time to the study of languages, she might have more usefully and practically contributed to the improvement of mankind, by pursuing such studies as have rendered Miss Edgeworth and Mrs. Hamilton instructive examples to the females of the present day.

Mrs. Carter has long been known, and highly respected in the literary world, by the publication of original poems, a translation of Epictetus, and other works. She had the singular good fortune to establish and increase her reputation, from a very early period of life, until the verge of ninety. She was born at Deal, in which town her father enjoyed a perpetual curacy, on the 16th of December, 1717, N.S. At the age of ten, she

had the misfortune to lose her mother. It is very remarkable that, though her infancy and early youth afforded no promise of her future attainments, and that she gained the rudiments of knowledge with great labour and difficulty, it was even then her most earnest desire to become learned. The slowness with which she conquered the impediments, that always oppose the beginning of the study of the dead languages, was such as wearied even the patience of her father, and he repeatedly entreated her to give up all thoughts of becoming a scholar. Besides this slowness of acquisition, she had a still more formidable adversary in the constitutional indolence of her habit; and, while she overcame the former, she was under the necessity of combating the latter by a thousand minute and very singular contrivances. To preserve herself awake for study during a great part of the night, she contracted at an early age a habit of taking snuff; to insure a recurrence to her labours as soon as possible in the morning, she was furnished with alarums; and at a more advanced period of her life, (for, though always an early riser, she never awoke at the proper hour without effort and management,) she had a bell placed at the head of her bed, which the sexton pulled every morning between four and five, "with as much heart and good will," according to her own expression, "as if he was ringing my knell." In the ardour of literary exertion, she would chew raw tea and coffee, and bind a wet cloth round her head, and apply another to her stomach. The application of such stimulants laid the foundation of constant and severe head-aches, which became habitual in her youth, and incurable during life; and which, in a great measure, disqualified her from pur-

suing those very studies, for the sake of which they were incurred.

Such ardour and industry could not fail to be crowned with complete success. She made herself mistress of the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Italian, Spanish, German, Portuguese, and Arabic languages. The last mentioned language, indeed, she never professed to understand well, yet she was able to make a dictionary, correcting various mistakes of translators and lexicographers.

Her father bestowed uncommon pains on her education, to which he dedicated much of his time; but it is evident, that she herself must have contributed greatly to forward his views; for without a willing mind, and a happy facility of talent, in addition to the most unceasing industry, it is not possible to conceive how this accomplished female could have obtained the mastery of so many languages. So great was her proficiency, that her brother received his classical education from her, before he went to Canterbury school. In mathematical knowledge she made sufficient progress to become well acquainted with astronomy; and she was particularly delighted with tracing the geography of the ancient historians.

In her short intervals of relaxation from more laborious study, she found time to keep up a poetical correspondence with Cave, the Editor of the Gentleman's Magazine, under her own name of Eliza; and, in 1738, she published a collection of her poems, written when she was under the age of twenty. In the same year was completed her translation of Crousaz's Examination of the Essay on Man; and, in the next year, she gave to the world both that work, and a translation, in two volumes, of Algarotti's "*Newtonianismo per le Dame*," or, "Sir Isaac

Newton's Philosophy explained, for the use of the Ladies, in six dialogues on Light and Colours."

The appearance of a young lady, scarcely one and twenty years of age, possessed of such solid and various attainments, excited very general regard and admiration; which would doubtless have been heightened and increased, had it been known that she owed them to laudable ambition, and never ceasing perseverance, not to the facility of learning, or a juvenile quickness of apprehension.

Even at this period, the fame of Mrs. Carter was not confined to her own country; she received a complimentary letter in French, and another in French and Latin, from that extraordinary youth Barratier, whose wonderful talents and early death are described by Johnson.

She appears, some time after, to have excited the attention of the fashionable literary world, as appears by a passage in the correspondence published of the Countess Hertford and Pomfret. Lady Hertford, writing in 1739, observes, "I have been agreeably amused by reading Signor Algarotti's *Newtonianismo per le Dame*, translated into English from the Italian, in a very good style, by a young woman not more than twenty years old. I am well informed that she is an admirable Greek and Latin scholar; and writes both these languages, as well as French and Italian, with great elegance. But what adds to the wonder she excites, is, that this learning has not made her the less reasonable woman, the less dutiful daughter, or the less agreeable and faithful friend.

While a just tribute is paid to her extraordinary learning; her early and extensive powers of reflection; her amiable unassuming disposition, wholly free from vanity or pride; her habitual piety; her affectionate and

faithful attachment to all her more immediate connexions, there is one important trait in her character, which should not be omitted; a trait which is not less honourable, and perhaps, in her peculiar circumstances, of far more difficult attainment; her decided love of truth, unmindful of whatever might be its unpopularity; and which she exemplified in the firmness with which she defended the principles of her father, while he was persecuted for obeying the dictates of his conscience in refusing to read the Athanasian creed. Superior to all the fascinations of the flattering distinction arising from the patronage, the intimacy, and the friendship of the highest church dignitaries, Mrs. Carter nobly defended her father, in a pamphlet entitled "Remarks on the Athanasian creed, on a sermon preached at the parish church of Deal, Oct. 15th, 1752, and on a pamphlet lately published, with the title, 'Some short and plain arguments from Scripture, evidently proving the Divinity of our Saviour.' In a letter to the Rev. Mr. Randolph, rector of Deal; by a Lady." The following is the appropriate motto: 'To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we by him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.' It is written in a style of polished irony; takes no notice of the prosecution carrying on against Dr. Carter by the mayor and corporation of Deal, a fact no doubt at that time too well known to have required mentioning, and is merely an answer to Mr. Randolph's defence of the principles upon which the prosecution was founded. It begins in the following manner:

Reverend Sir,

Not to waste your time by a tedious introduction, the design of this address is to ask the favour of you first to instruct me how to under-

stand the. Athanasian Creed consistently with the principles of reason; how it is to be reconciled with all those passages in the New Testament, which either directly, or by fair consequence, ascribe supremacy to God the Father only; and how the several parts of it may be interpreted in a sense, so as not to be repugnant to each other."

The transaction itself, and the controversy it occasioned, appear at the time to have excited great and general attention; Mrs. Carter's share in it to have been well known; her merit on that account to have been duly appreciated, and the consequences which resulted, extremely perplexing to her worthy father, and productive of considerable pecuniary loss to himself and to his family.

A short time after, another pamphlet, written by an anonymous author, was published, entitled, "A Letter to the Mayor and corporation of Deal, in Kent, in relation to their opinion upon the Trinity." This pamphlet is also written in a strain of irony, and is not unworthy of being a companion of that already mentioned, by Mrs. Carter. It opens in the following manner:

Gentlemen,

Permit me to congratulate you upon the step you have taken in presenting the minister of your chapel, Dr. Carter, in the spiritual court, for omitting to read, on the days appointed by the Rubric, that ancient and venerable part of our liturgy, the Athanasian Creed. 'Tis, without doubt, a very laudable zeal you have shewn for the purity of the Catholic faith, and what will transmit your memories with a sweet-smelling savour to the latest posterity. It will be said, that when Orthodoxy was retiring from the innermost parts of the land, and taking wing for distant regions, the

men of Deal arrested her flight, and detained her awhile on the borders of the sea. These, gentlemen, are your honors, and babes will be taught to lisp them in the arms of their nurses."

That Dr. Carter was injured in his fortune, at the same time that his peace of mind was painfully interrupted, must be gathered from the 30th, 31st, and 32d pages of the same pamphlet.

"I am really very serious, and very much in earnest, when I ask you, whether you can, upon cool recollection, approve the severe treatment which Dr. Carter has received from you?" "Could you settle the dispute" (about the appointment, as appears, of a parish clerk) "no otherwise than by driving him from the exercise of his function, and obliging him to keep a curate? Herein, indeed, you did him a little favour, which I verily believe you are not aware of; the punishment intended being of such a sort, as you were certain could never take place, but from the opinion you had of his honesty. You bear testimony to his character at the same time that you hurt his fortune. You must know him to be a man possessed of a mind above prevarication, who would not appear outwardly to give his assent to what in his heart he could not approve. Would every clergyman in the kingdom declare his real sentiments in this affair as freely and publicly as this gentleman has done, I suspect they would appear a larger body of men than some people are aware of; and, from the weight of numbers, perhaps the objections might be removed. I hope, now the doctor is a declared heretic, that according to the laudable doctrine of some of your divines, you are so consistent with yourselves as to avoid all manner of conversation with him; nay, I can hardly think it quite safe for you

to hold any correspondence with his most ingenious and amiable daughter, the young lady being, I am apt to fear, a little infected with her father's pestilential principles. Pray take my advice, and keep your wives and daughters, yea, and your sons too, out of her way, or let me tell you, very fatal may be the consequences."

Mrs. Carter was kind and lively, and her laborious application to study did not prevent her from joining in the innocent amusements of her friends. Her person was not unpleasing; her admirers were numerous; and though she, at an early age, determined to remain unmarried, for the sake of paying a more constant attention to those which she considered as the most important objects of existence, one gentleman certainly engaged her affection. Her father had also listened, with favour, to his proposals: but he forfeited her partiality, by publishing a few verses, "which, though not absolutely indecent, yet seemed to show too light and licentious a turn of mind." From this time, she never entertained any serious thoughts of matrimony, though several distinguished characters were attached to her.

An accident, which at first assumed an unpropitious appearance, made her known to Richardson, the author of *Sir Charles Grandison*, *Clarissa*, and *Pamela*. Richardson, then in the meridian of his reputation, received a letter from Mrs. Carter, complaining that he "had thought proper to print an ode*, which she apprehended no one had a right to publish, if she did not chuse to do it herself;" and to this she added, "such a proceeding was ungenerous, and unworthy a man of

reputation." Five days after, Richardson explained the transaction, by observing, that a lady had given him a copy of the ode, without imposing any restrictions whatever. He, at the same time presented her with the work in which the ode was inserted, "not by way of satisfaction or atonement, but to see how the ode is introduced."

In consequence of this incident, mutual civilities having taken place, a regular correspondence was carried on, with a considerable degree of spirit on both sides, during the years 1747, 1748, and 1753, inclusive.

The most intimate among Mrs. Carter's friends, and her most regular correspondents, were Miss Talbot and Mrs. Montagu. By the latter she was introduced into the higher circles of literary and fashionable life. No person ever commanded more of the respect of society, or was treated with greater kindness by her acquaintance, than Mrs. Carter. Her friends had expected that Lord Bath, with whom towards the close of his life she had been on terms of intimacy, and in whose company she had travelled to Spa, would bequeath her a handsome provision; but they were disappointed. When, however, his Lordship's fortune devolved on Sir W. Johnstone, who then took the name of Pulteney, that gentleman immediately settled on her an annuity of £.100; which was afterward, in consideration of the pressure of the times, increased to £.150. Mrs. Montagu being enabled, by the death of her husband, who left his whole fortune at her disposal, to assist her friend, she also granted Mrs. Carter £.100 a year, and secured it by her bond. These donations, added to her patrimony, to some occasional legacies, and to the acquisitions made by her several publications, provided her with a

* An Ode to Wisdom.

competent income; a considerable part of which was uniformly devoted to charitable purposes

While Mrs. Carter was occasionally a contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, she became acquainted with Dr. Johnson, then an obscure author, struggling into celebrity. At a subsequent period, she wrote two essays for the *Rambler*. No. 44 consists of an allegory, in which Religion and Superstition are delineated in a masterly manner. No. 100 is an excellent letter on modern pleasures; she turns "the numberless benefits of a modish life" into ridicule; she attacks "French novels," "Sunday card parties," "little oaths," "polite dissimulation," "tea-table scandal," and "the extatic delight of unfriendly intimacies."

In a letter without a date, Mrs. Carter thus expresses herself respecting the *Rambler*, which had not then attained its deserved share of celebrity. "I extremely honour the just indignation you express at the cold reception which has been given by a stupid, trifling, ungrateful world to the *Rambler*. You may conclude, by my calling names in this outrageous manner," adds she, "that I am as zealous in the cause of this excellent paper as yourself. But we may both comfort ourselves, than an author who has employed the noblest powers of genius and learning, the strongest force of understanding, and the most beautiful ornaments in the service of virtue and morality, can never sink into oblivion, however he may at present be little regarded. There seems to be, in the rotation of human affairs, certain popular returns of good sense, and true taste; and when the laugh of folly is out of breath, and the mad tumult of giddy pleasure subsides, our favourite *Rambler* will

meet with the applause and veneration he so justly merits."

After having obtained in her youth the greatest reputation for learning and abilities, it may seem singular, that a long time elapsed before Mrs. Carter again appeared at the bar of the public.

In 1757, she published a translation of Epictetus from the Greek. It will be considered honourable to the good sense of the public at that time, that 1018 copies of Epictetus were found insufficient for the subscribers, and it became necessary to print a second edition. It sold so well, that some years afterwards, Dr. Secker, then Archbishop of Canterbury, brought a bookseller's catalogue to her, saying, "Here, Mrs. Carter, see how ill I am used by the world; here are my sermons selling at half price, while your Epictetus, truly, is not to be had under 18 shillings." The translation of Epictetus has been thrice reprinted, twice in her lifetime, in two volumes duodecimo, and since her death in two volumes octavo. The Archbishop entertained some apprehensions that this book might injure the cause of religion, by placing the power of philosophy in too strong a light; but Mrs. Carter, in her observations on this subject, in her correspondence with Miss Talbot, asserted, that she had not such intentions.

About the year 1762, Mrs. Carter first collected her fugitive pieces into a little volume; at the desire of the late Earl of Bath. Simplicity of sentiment, melodious sweetness of expression, and morality the most amiable, are displayed in every page; but although the poems attracted a degree of attention, they were less indebted for their favourable reception to their intrinsic merit, than to the previous celebrity of

their author, and her numerous connections in the literary world. They were translated, some into French, some into Latin; and they were ushered into the world with considerable pomp and ceremony, having an eulogy in blank verse prefixed to them by Lord Lyttelton, (as the name appears to have been written by himself, and his contemporaries,) and dedicated to the Earl of Bath. After the lapse of a long period, these poems have reached only a fourth edition. It may be fairly questioned, whether they have not attained their full measure of reputation, as they are unquestionably far inferior to her prose writings. In addition to original compositions, the volume contains two translations from the Italian of Metastasio. The general character of her poems seems to be rather ease, correctness, and elegance, than fire or strength. To their excellent moral tendency, they are principally indebted for the station which they still retain in the libraries of the ladies.

That delicacy which formed a striking feature in Mrs. Carter's character, amounted to extreme timidity on particular occasions.* Her own description of her deportment, when she first became acquainted with Lord Lyttelton, is natural and humorous:

"MRS. CARTER TO MISS TALBOT.

Deal, May 3, 1756.

"Will you pity me for a trial I lately went through from which I received a great deal of honour, at the expense of looking, as you have very often seen me do, most grievously foolish? It was no

less than a visit from Sir George Lyttelton. To my great consolation, however, it was very dark when he came, and I had taken special care not to have candles introduced, till I might reasonably hope some few, at least, of the idiot features might vanish from my countenance. By this contrivance, and the assistance of a work-bag, from which he must conclude me extremely notable at a time when it was impossible for one to see a stitch, I behaved myself with tolerable fortitude; and if he had staid a quarter of an hour longer, it is very probable I might have so far improved, as even to speak articulately. I forget whether I mentioned to you some time ago, my taking the liberty of writing to Sir George Lyttelton, to solicit his favour for a person in singular circumstances of distress. He answered me with a politeness and humanity, with which I am sure you would have been charmed; and it is to this correspondence that I owe the honour of his visit."

In 1782, in her sixty-fifth year, Mrs. Carter visited Paris: but the notes taken on this excursion are few and imperfect; and it would be hardly worth while to advert to this journey, if it were not the last incident that interrupted the quiet uniformity of her life. From that time, she divided her year between her own home at Deal, and lodgings that she regularly occupied every winter in Clarges-street, London, with the exception of some occasional visits to friends residing in various parts of the country. The majority of the companions with whom she lived, were literary characters of her own sex. In the possession of a comfortable income, and in the enjoyment of all the pleasures of friendship and society, her days glided away in as much hap-

* At an earlier period of life, in a letter to Richardson, she says, "I fairly own that the delectable history of Fortunatus has often set me a longing for a cap which had the same qualities for *sheepish persons*; but as no such cap, to my sorrow, could I ever get, my only expedient was, always

retiring to a window, and rolling myself up in a curtain, where I have often sat many an hour after I have been heartily tired of the company, and the company perhaps had forgotten me, rather than develop my figure, and walk out of the room before it grew dark."

piness as is consistent with that extended age, which must witness the frequent loss of our earliest and dearest connections. After having received various warnings of approaching dissolution, which did not affect her faculties, she expired without a groan or a struggle, on the 19th of December, 1806, in the 89th year of her age. During her illness, she had expressed her earnest desire that she might be interred, in the most private manner, in the parish in which she should die; and she was therefore deposited in Grosvenor Chapel, an appendage to the Church of St. George, Hanover-square, in which parish she breathed her last. No one will deny the justice of the simple epitaph inscribed on her tomb, which records, that she was "a lady as much distinguished by piety and virtue, as for deep learning, and extensive knowledge."

The following character of Mrs. Carter is from the pen of a lady, who was one of her most intimate friends for more than half a century.

"Mrs. Elizabeth Carter has long been well known, and highly respected, for her superior understanding, and extensive knowledge, scien-

tific and familiar, from the highest researches in philosophy, to the commonest useful acquirements. She was qualified for the society of the first scholars, by her intimacy with the learned languages, as was evinced by her translation of Epictetus from the Greek original. She possessed a masculine understanding; while she was invested with such innate modesty, that her superior acquirements never obtruded into company. Her heart was open to the keenest sensibility for all distresses of the afflicted; and her mind piously resigned to meet with fortitude the changes and chances of life; while her firm faith in the Christian religion, strengthened her in the performance of every duty; and it may be truly said, that with all her very rare endowments, goodness of heart, mildness of temper, and suavity of manners, were predominant in all her conduct, as also in the placid serenity of her interesting countenance."

[*Monthly Magazine; Monthly Review; Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, by the Rev. Montagu Pennington; &c. &c.*]

DETACHED ANECDOTES AND OBSERVATIONS.

INSTANCE OF PATERNAL AFFECTION OVERCOMING GREAT DIFFICULTIES.

A YOUNG man who had received a good education from respectable parents, and bred to the business of a ship-carpenter, married a young woman, to whom he was so much attached, that, not able to bear the thoughts of separation, he would accept of no employment but on the terms of carrying his wife along with him on

the voyage. On these conditions he was engaged on board a merchantman; but at length it unfortunately happened that his wife died on the coast of Africa, from whence the ship was to proceed to America, and he, of course, was obliged to continue with it until the voyage was completed. His wife expired; but that the new-born babe did not share his mother's fate, may, in such circumstances, seem surprising. There